

**THE EMBODIMENTS OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY  
OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:**

1. A method of performing a task by a machine comprising the steps of:
  - a) providing information to said machine as a data structure indicative of meaning and context of said information in a natural language;
  - b) identifying data structures meeting criteria defined by said task, and;
  - c) collecting said identified data structures.
2. A method according to claim 1 wherein said identified data structures are further processed on the basis of context indicated in said data structure.
3. A method according to claim 1 wherein said data structure indicates relative importance of said information in said natural language.
4. A method according to claim 1 wherein said data structure includes an indication of role of said information in said natural language.
5. A method according to claim 1 wherein said data structure is applied to a word of a sentence in a natural language and said data structure indicates role and relative importance of said word within said sentence.
6. A method according to claim 5 wherein said role and said importance of said word are indicated by co-ordinates in a matrix and retained in said data structure.
7. A method according to claim 1 wherein said matrix includes an axis indicating tense of said word.
8. An information retrieval system comprising a collection of information organised as data structures indicative of meaning and context of said information in a natural language, an interpretation engine to convert a query in a natural language in to a corresponding data

1 structure and a search engine to identify common data structures in said query and said  
2 collection.

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4 9. An information retrieval system according to claim 8 wherein said translation engine  
5 includes a translation device to allocate meaning to said query and a contextual function  
6 to provide an indication of context within said structure.

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8 10. A system according to claim 9 including a function implementing a decision making  
9 algorithm to determine relative correspondence between said common data structures.

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11 11. A system according to claim 10 wherein said function includes a fuzzy logic algorithm.  
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